

**EVALUATION OF  
JOB SHARING FOR NURSES  
IN THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

**A Report to the Governor and the Legislature of the State of Hawaii**

**Submitted by the  
Legislative Auditor of the State of Hawaii  
Honolulu, Hawaii**

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## **FOREWORD**

Act 73, Session Laws of Hawaii 1986, authorized the establishment of a two-year job sharing pilot project for nurses employed within the Department of Health. The Legislative Auditor is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of this project.

This evaluation is composed of three sections. Section I consists of the introduction which reviews the progress made in other job sharing projects in Hawaii. Section II reports on the implementation status and the level of participation by nurses employed within the Department of Health. Section III identifies some problem areas and issues which should be considered in the next year of project implementation.

We acknowledge with thanks the excellent cooperation and assistance which was extended to our staff by job sharing applicants and participants, as well as other employees of the Department of Health.

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## **EVALUATION OF JOB SHARING FOR NURSES IN THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

### **Introduction**

Job sharing is the voluntary sharing of a full-time, permanent employee's position with another employee, with each working one-half of the total number of hours of work required per month, and each receiving one-half of the salary to which each is respectively entitled, and at least one-half of each employee benefit afforded to full-time employees.

Evaluations of pilot job sharing projects for teachers and librarians within the Department of Education found that they successfully achieved the objective of providing a viable employment option. Job sharing teachers reported greater job satisfaction and work productivity, and the State incurred lower costs than it would have using full-time teachers.<sup>1</sup> Library personnel participating in the project strongly supported job sharing as a permanent employment option. Costs of job sharing for library personnel were also less than would have been incurred for full-time employees.<sup>2</sup>

### **Act 73 Provisions and Implementation Status**

Act 73, Session Laws of Hawaii 1986, established a two-year pilot project to test the feasibility of job sharing among nursing personnel in the Department of Health (DOH). The pilot job sharing project for nurses employed within the department was established based upon legislative findings that innovative approaches were needed to ensure flexible employment options for Hawaii's people.

Since the pilot job sharing projects for teachers and librarians had been found successful, the concept warranted expansion to other departments.

The Legislature found the DOH to be an appropriate agency since many nurses were leaving the profession due to nonflexible working hours. Job sharing would provide the flexibility for nurses to continue to practice their profession on a part-time basis as well as the opportunity to spend time with their families or pursue additional training which would ultimately benefit the State and their patients.

The legislative auditor is directed by Act 73 to monitor and evaluate the pilot project, paying particular attention to:

- . the efficacy of the job sharing concept; and
- . factors which facilitate or make more difficult the implementation of the job sharing project.

Status reports were to be submitted for each year of the pilot project. No report was issued in 1987 because there were no job sharers participating in the project at that time.

**Current Status:**  
**Summary of Findings**

1. There is limited participation in the job sharing pilot project for nursing personnel. This limited participation is due to factors such as: the inability of nursing personnel to live on part-time salaries, misunderstanding of job sharing responsibilities, and lack of support by the administration at certain medical facilities.



2. Job sharing participants, pending applicants, and most nursing administration staff agree that the project is beneficial, and job sharing is needed as a permanent option for both recruitment and retention of nursing personnel.

### **Implementation by the Department**

The department issued guidelines for the job sharing project in December 1986 to all programs which employ nurses. The project guidelines limit participation to Registered Professional Nurse (RPN) IIIs in hospital settings, and RPN IVs in non-hospital settings. The majority of nurses employed within the department are classified as either RPN IIIs or IVs. These nurses have at least six months of professional nursing experience.

Selection criteria for participation include the following:

- . "The employee is a regular 100% FTE employee.
- . "The affected position is within established quotas and the job sharing will not cause any undue hardship or problem for the hospital or program".<sup>3</sup>

If the administrator has more employees desiring job sharing than is operationally feasible, the following additional criteria will be considered:

- . factors affecting hospital or program operations;
- . length of continuous service in the hospital or program;
- . employees desiring to spend more time with their immediate families;
- . transition to retirement;
- . employees seeking to improve themselves professionally (i.e. enrollment in courses, seminars, workshops, or other professional enrichment courses); and
- . health reasons.

Applicants, if accepted, must develop a sharing plan and enter into a contractual agreement for at least one and not longer than two years.

For administrative purposes, the job sharing project was divided between county/state hospital nurses and nurses within other units of DOH. Therefore, this report will separately address implementation within these two divisions.

**County/state program.** The first recruitment announcement was issued in January 1987 and as of September 1987, 27 applications were received. According to data from the personnel office of the county/state hospital division, only eight nurses have been successfully matched for job sharing out of the 27 applicants. Act 73 asks for the demographic characteristics of the job sharers. They are all Caucasian females with the exception of one Caucasian male. Successful matches are currently operating at Kona Hospital, and last year, there were a pair of job sharers each at Hana Medical Center and Kohala Hospital.

The nursing administration at the individual hospital is responsible for coordinating and approving the match. The common method of job sharing is to split a week, with each nurse working either an 8-hour and 12-hour shifts, or three 8-hour shifts. In the latter case, the nurses generally work four hours overtime. The other consideration for sharing is to match skill levels so that specialty areas such as obstetrics and critical care are covered by nurses with equivalent training and experience.

The county/state division nurses may execute a job sharing contract with another regular full-time nurse or a temporary new hire. During the contractual period, the regular nurses receive half-salary and benefits, along with civil service continuity. The new hire nurses, depending upon their assignment, are eligible for

benefits according to civil service law but are not given civil service status. If they wish to become regular employees, they must go through civil service recruitment and eligibility determination.

**Other DOH programs.** The first recruitment announcement was issued in January 1987, and only three applications have been received as of January 1988. These three applications were received from public health nurses employed within the medical health services division. The branch chief responsible for approving the applications noted that the requests were denied due to staff shortages and the disruptive effect job sharing would have on continuity of service delivery to clients.

### **Observations and Issues**

This section summarizes problem areas as they have emerged during the first year of implementation and raises some issues to be considered during the second year of implementation.

**Job sharing in county/state hospitals.** One of the overriding concerns voiced by nursing administrators is that job sharing will exacerbate an already serious labor shortage in the nursing profession. However, this perception may also be masking the fact that the shortage could be due in part to the lack of part-time, flexible employment.

For instance, Kona Hospital has been successful in matching the majority of their applicants, and job sharing participants indicate that they will continue their employment as long as there is job sharing. The administration further reports that job sharing has helped with their nursing shortage and reduced turnover of regular employees. The administration at Kona has actively supported the project, as shown by its success.



The project's success can also be demonstrated by a job sharing match that, until December, was operating at Hana Medical Center despite the fact that Hana has only two RPN III positions.

In contrast, Maui Memorial Hospital has yet to implement job sharing, and over 50 percent of their applicants have resigned because they failed to be matched. Several former regular employees who were applicants for job sharing noted that they were told by the nursing administration that their applications were being held due to staff shortages. The nurses felt, however, that the administration was resisting the implementation of job sharing, and after many months of waiting, they resigned their positions. Thus, the hospital is left with a deficit which is far worse than if these employees had been approved for job sharing. Further, the holding of applications by the administration sends a message into the nursing community that they are not willing to be flexible, and this could hamper recruiting efforts.

Other issues which limited participation, as related by the nursing administrators, is the inability for nurses to live on a part-time salary and the unwillingness of some nurses to be responsible for sharing positions. Unfortunately, the salary and benefits of part-time employment do eliminate those who are the sole support of their families, but perhaps the project could be made more flexible so that the splitting of a position would reflect a 70/30 or 60/40 share. The complication with this strategy is that according to state civil service laws most benefits are not afforded to those who work less than 20 hours per week. However, there could be nurses who are not currently employed but would be willing to act as "relief partners" for wages without benefits.

Discussions with applicants revealed that they were not unwilling to share the responsibility of job sharing but were concerned that they would be required by the nursing administration to work overtime for their partner in the event that the partner was not available. Overtime is one of the main factors that has motivated many nurses to seek part-time employment because in reality their full-time employment requires 40-hour weeks, plus extended shifts and often working on their days off. The concern is raised because part-time employment would likely still include overtime due to the severity of the nursing shortage.

**Positive impacts.** Although participation has been limited, the few employees whose positions have been converted are highly supportive of the project and are encouraged enough by the project to continue their employment with the State. Further, former hospital employees indicated that they would be willing to return to the hospital if job sharing positions were offered to them. Finally, most hospital nursing administrators facing a serious nursing shortage agree that they would like to see job sharing continued as a permanent option for recruiting new hires and retaining regular employees who may be interested in the future.

**Job sharing in other DOH programs.** According to various branch level administrators, there has been little interest in job sharing by nursing staff in other program areas. The majority of these nurses are involved in providing community health services to a variety of clients. The service areas include: communicable disease, developmental disabilities, family and mental health, and public health. Because the majority of nurses in these programs carry large and varied caseloads, some administrators assert that there is no way to equitably divide a caseload. They also expressed concern about the lack of continuity of care offered by part-time caseworkers, and clients who could be confused by the assignment of two

caseworkers. While these are valid concerns, the overall attitude seems to be reluctance on the part of the administration to try job sharing as an option and a tendency to dismiss it as a cause of further problems rather than a workable solution to personnel shortages.

### **Summary**

Our report indicates that in spite of limited participation, job sharing within the nursing profession can work if given the proper support and effort necessary to meet the needs of the employees as well as the community. Further, if these results and those of the other pilot programs are considered, the job sharing concept provides a viable employment option and incentive to retain valuable personnel who might otherwise not be able to continue their employment with the State.

In our previous evaluations of pilot projects, we recommended that voluntary job sharing be made a permanent job option. We also suggested that a general job sharing statute be enacted to allow for its expansion into other occupational groups.

### **Recommendations**

*We recommend that voluntary job sharing be authorized for nursing personnel as a permanent job option. We further recommend that the Department of Health be allowed to modify the project to provide for matches in the county/state hospitals on a 70/30 or 60/40 basis, accepting the constraints of the civil service law which does not allow benefits for less than 20 hours of employment.*

*We recommend that Maui Memorial Hospital implement job sharing for interested employees and former employee applicants.*



*Finally, we recommend that the permanent authorization of job sharing be accomplished through the enactment of a general statute which would extend job sharing to other positions and departments of state government.*



## NOTES

1. Hawaii, Legislative Auditor, *Job Sharing Pilot Project in the Department of Education: Final Evaluation*, Honolulu, March 1981.
2. Hawaii, Legislative Auditor, *Evaluation of Job Sharing in the Public Library System*, Honolulu, February 1986.
3. Hawaii, Department of Health, *Job Sharing Program Guidelines*, Honolulu, December 1986.